

REMARKS

Claims 4 and 10-20 are pending. By this amendment, claim 4 is amended and new claims 10-20 are added. No new matter is added.

The Office Action asserts that the application lacks reference to the prior application. However, Applicants note that in the Continuing Application Transmittal filed July 26, 2001, box #5 was checked to request that the specification be amended to refer to the prior application.

The Office Action contains a single rejection of claim 4 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over Beshty (U.S. Patent No. 4,946,667) in view of Tachihara et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,536,748) and Lovercheck (U.S. Patent No. 4,424,771). This rejection is traversed.

The present invention enables warming up a catalyst and stopping the reforming apparatus quickly while preventing high-rate reaction regions by using a first mixed water/methanol solution tank for reforming, a second mixed water/methanol solution tank for warming up and for stopping the apparatus, and the switching means that switches these tanks.

The first and second mixed water/methanol solution tanks according to the present application are not taught or suggested by Beshty or Lovercheck.

Tachihara et al. was filed as U.S. Patent application serial number 09/704,706 on November 3, 2000.

Applicants note that the three Japanese priority documents of the present application were filed on November 30, 1999. Applicants have filed herewith verified translations of the three priority documents. Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit

that the perfection of the priority claim of the present application removes Tachihara et al. as prior art.

The removal of Tachihara et al. as prior art renders moot the outstanding rejection of claim 4.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claim 4 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) are respectfully requested.

Applicants respectfully submit that this application is in condition for allowance and such action is earnestly solicited. If the Examiner believes that anything further is desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' undersigned representative at the telephone number listed below to schedule a personal or telephone interview to discuss any remaining issues.

In the event this paper is not being timely filed, Applicants respectfully petition for an appropriate extension of time. Any additional fees may be charged to Counsel's Deposit Account 01-2300, **referencing attorney docket number 107439-00049**.

Respectfully submitted,



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